

The two^{2^d} last Speeches of
Thomas Wentworth, late Earle of *Straf-*
ford, and Deputy of *Ireland*. 19

The one in the Tower, the other on
the Scaffold on Tower-hill,

May the 12th 1641.

New revised by the perfectest Coppy, with some
Additions, *which was formerly omitted.*



*His speech in the Tower to the Lords, before
he went to execution.*

Right Honourable, and the rest, you are now come to convey mee to my death, I am willing to dye, which is a thing no more than all our Predecessors have done, and a debt that our Posteritie must in their due time discharge, which since it can be no way avoyded, it ought the lesse to be feared; for that which is common to all, ought not to be intolerable to any: It is the Law of Nature, the tribute of the flesh, a remedy from all worldly cares and troubles; and to the truly penitent, a perfect path to blessednesse. And there is but one death, though severall wayes unto it: mine is not naturall, but enforced by the Law and Justice: it hath beene sayd that the Lawes vex only the meaner sort of people, but the mightie are able to withstand them: it is not so with me, for to the Law I submit my selfe, and confesse that I receive nothing but justice: for hee that politickely intendeth good to a Common-weale, may be called a just man, but hee that practiseth either for his owne profit, or any other sinister ends, may be well termed a delinquent person; neither is delay in punishment any privilege for pardon. And moreover, I ingenuously confesse with *Cicero*, That the death of the bad is the safetie of the good that be alive.

Let no man trust eyther in the favour of his Prince, the friendship and consanguinity of his Peeres, muchlesse in his owne wisdom and knowledge, of which I ingenuously confesse I have beene too confident. Kings, as they are men before God, so they are Gods before men, and I may say with a great man once in this Kingdome, *Had I strived to obey my*

God as faithfully, as I sought to honour my King diligently, I had stood, and not fallen. Most happie and fortunate is that Prince, who is as much for his justice feared, as for his goodnesse beloved: For the greater that Princes are in power above other, the more they ought in vertue to excell other; and such is the royall Soveraigne whom I late served.

For my Peeres, the correspondence that I had with them during my prosperitie, was to mee very delightfull and pleasing, and here they have commiserated my ruine, I have plentifully found, who (for the most generous of them) I may boldly say, though they have detested the fact, yet they have pitied the person delinquent, the first in their loyaltie, the last in their charitie: ingenuously confessing, that never any subject, or peere of my rank, had ever that help of Counsell, that benefit of time, or a more free and legall tryall than I have had: in the like whereof, none of my precessors hath had so much favour from his prince, so much sufferance from the people; in which I comprehend the understanding Commons, not the many headed monster, Multitude: But I have offended, am sentenced, and must now suffer.

And for my too much confidence in my supposed wisdom and knowledge, therein have beene the most deceived: For hee is wise to himselfe, that knowes by others faults to correct his owne offences: to be truly wise is to be Secretaries to our selves; for it is meere folly to reveale our intimate thoughts to strangers: wisdom is the most precious Gem with which the mind can be adorned, and learning the most famous thing for which a man ought to bee esteemed, and true wisdom teacheth us to doe well, as to speake well: in the first I have failed, for *the wisdom of man is foolishnesse with God.*

For knowledge, it is a thing indifferent both to good and evil, but the best knowledge is for a man to know himselfe; hee that doth so, shal esteeme of himselfe but little, for hee considereth from whence he came, and wherto he must go, he

regardeth not the vaine pleasures of this life, hee exalteth God, and strives to live in his feare ; but he that knoweth not himselfe, is wilful in his owne wayes, unprofitable in his life, unfortunate in his death, and so am I. But the reason why I sought to attaine unto it, was this : I have read that he that knoweth not that which he ought to know, is a Bruit beast amongst men : hee that knoweth more than hee ought to know, is a man amongst beasts : but hee that knoweth all that may be knowne, is a God amongst men. To this I much aspired, in this I much failed; *Vanitie of vanities, all is but vanitie.*

I have heard the people clamour and cry out, saying, That through my occasion the times are bad, I wish that when I am dead they may prove better : most true it is, that there is at this time a great storme impending (God in his mercie avert it.) And since it is my particular lot, like *Jonah*, to bee cast into the sea, I shall think my life well spent, to appease Gods wrath, and satisfie the peoples malice.

O what is eloquence more than aire ? fashioned with an articulate and distinct sound, when it is a speciall vertue to speake little and well, and silence is oft the best oratorie ; for fooles in their dumbnesse may bee accounted wise : It hath power to make a good matter seeme bad, and a bad cause appeare good : but mine was to mee unprofitable, and like the Cypresse trees, which are great and tall, but altogether without fruit.

What is honour ? but the first step to disquietnesse, and power is still waited on by envie, neither hath it any privilege against infamie. It is held to be the chiefe part of honor, for a man to joyne to his office and calling, curtesie and affabilitie, commiseration and pitie : for thereby he draweth to him with a kind of compulsion, the hearts of the multitude. But that was the least part of my study, which now makes me call to mind, that the greater the persons are in authority, the sooner they are catcht in any delinquencie, and their

smallest crimes are thought to bee capitall, the smallest spot seemes great in the finest linnen, and the least flaw is soonest found in the richest Diamond. But high and noble spirits finding themselves wounded, grieve not so much at their owne paine and perplexitie, as at the derision and scofs of their enemy : but for mine owne part, though I might have many in my life, I hope to finde none in my death.

Amongst other things which pollute and contaminate the mindes of great spirits, there is none more heinous than Ambition, which is seldome unaccompanied with Avarice: Such, to possesse their ends, care not to violate the Lawes of Religion, and Reason, and to breake the bonds of Modesty and equity, with the nearest tyes of Consanguinity, and Amity; of which as I have beene guilty, so I crave at Gods hands forgiveness. It is a Maxime in Philosophy, that ambitious men can bee never good Counsellours to Princes; the desire of having more is common to great Lords, and a desire of Rule a great cause of their Ruine.

My Lords, I am now the hopelesse President, may I bee to you all an happy example: For Ambition devoureth gold, and drinketh blond, and climbeth so high by other mens heads, that at the length in the fall it breaketh its own neck: therefore it is better to live in humble content, than in high care and trouble: For more precious is want with honesty, than wealth with infamy: For what are wee but meere vapours, which in a serene Element ascend high, and upon an instant, like Smoak, vanish into nothing: or like Ships without Pilors, tost up and downe upon the Seas by contrary winds and tempests. But the good husbandman thinks better of those eares of Corne, which bow downe, and grow crooked, than those which are streight and upright, because he is assured to finde more store of graine in the one than in the other. This all men know, yet of this, how few make use: The defect whereof must be now my paine: may my sin

For what hath now the favour of my Prince, the familiarity with my Peeres, the volubility of a tongue, the strength of my memory, my learning, or knowledge, my honours, or Offices, my power, and potency, my riches, and treasure, (all these the especiall gifts, both of Nature, and Fortune) what have all these profited mee? Blessings I acknowledge, though by God bestowed upon man; yet not all of them together upon many: yet by the Divine providence, the most of them met in me: of which had I made happy use, I might still have flourisht, who now am forc'd immaturly to fall.

I now could wish, (but that *utinam* is too late) that God with his outward goodnesse towards mee had so commixed his inward grace, that I had chused the *mediū* path, neither inclining to the right hand, nor deviating to the left; but like *Icarus* with my waxen wings, fearing by too low a flight to moysten them with the Waves: I soared too high, and too neare the Sunne, by which they being melted; I aiming at the highest, am precipitated to the lowest: and am made a wretched prey to the Waters: But I who before built my house upon the sand, have now setled my hopes upon the Rock my Saviour: by whose onely merits my sole trust is, that whatsoever becomes of my body, yet in this bosome my soule may be Sanctuaried.

Nimrod would have built a Tower to reach up to heaven, and cald it *Babel*; but God turned it to the confusion of Languages, and dissipation of the people. *Pharaoh* kept the Children of *Israel* in bondage, and after having freed them, in his great pride would have made them his prey; but God gave them a drie and miraculous passage, and *Pharaoh* and his host a watry Sepulcher. *Belshazzar* feasted his Princes and Prostitutes, who drunke healths in the Vessells taken from the Temple, but the hand of God writ upon the wall, *Mene Tekel Pheorax*; and that night before morning was both

men goe on a great while in their owne devices, but in the end it proved their own ruine and destruction, never suffering them to effect their desired purposes : therefore let none presume upon his power, glory in his greatnesse, or bee too confident in his riches : These things were written for our Instruction, of which the living may make use, the dying cannot ; but wit and unfruitfull wisdom are the next neighbours to folly.

There can bee no greater vanity in the world, than to esteeme the world, which regardeth no man ; and to make slight account of God who greatly respecteth all men ; and there can bee no greater folly in man, than by much Travell to increase his goods, and pamper his body, and in the interim with vaine delights and pleasures, to lose his soule. It is a great folly in any man to attempt a bad beginning, in hope of a good ending ; and to make that proper to one, which was before common to all, is meere indiscretion, and the beginning of discord, which I positively wish may end in this my punishment.

O how small a proportion of earth will containe my body, when my high minde could not be confined within the spacious compasse of two Kingdomes ? But my houre draweth on, and I conclude with the Psalmist, not ayming at any one man in particular, but speaking for all in generall : *How long will you Judges bee corrupted ? how long will yee cease to give true Iudgement ? &c. Blessed is the man that doth not walke in the Councell of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornfull, therefore they shall not stand in the Iudgement, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous, &c.*

About the houre of 12. a Clocke the aforesaid Lord of Strafford was conveyed to the Scaffold on Tower-Hill, where was a Court of Guard made by the severall Companies of Souldiers of the City of London, and the Hamlets of the

ched the Marshalls men to make way, then the Sheriffes of Londons Officers with their Halberds; after them the Kings Guard, or warders of the Tower: Next came one of his Gentlemen, bare headed, in mourning Habit, the Lord *Strafford* following him clad in blacke cloath, with divers others in the same habit, which were his attendance; then the Lord Bishop of *Armagh*, and other good Divines; with the Sheriffes of London, and divers honourable parsonages.]

The manner of his going from the Tower, to the Scaffold.



When he came to the Scaffold, he there shewed himselfe on each side in full view to all people, and made this short speech, with as much alacrity of Spirit, as a mortall man could expresse, viz.

The

*The Earle of Straffords last speech on
the Scaffold, and the manner how
he shewed himselfe and spake to the people.*



Y Lord Primate of *Ireland*, (and my Lords, and the rest of these Gentlemen) it is a very great comfort for me to have your Lordship by me this day, in regard I have been knowne to you a long time, I should be very glad to obtaine so much silence, as to hee heard a few words, but I doubt I shall not, my Lord. I come hither by the good will and pleasure of Almighty God, to pay that last debt I owe unto sin, which is death, and by the blessing of that God to rise again through the merits of Christ Jesus to eternall glorie. And hee being disturbed by the people, hee said, *What is the matter?* and sate downe in a chaire: some replyed, The Souldiers kept most stir: If they, said he, would be quiet, all the rest would be quiet. I wish I had been pri-

vate, that I might have bene heard, my Lord, if I might be so much beholding to you, that I might use a few words, I should take it for a very great courtesie: my Lord, I come hither to submit to that judgement which hath past against me, I doe it with a very quiet and contented minde, I doe freely forgive all the world, a forgiveness that is not spoken from the teeth outward (as they say) but from the heart; I speake it in the presence of Almighty God, before whom I stand, that there is not so much as a displeasing thought in me arising to any creature, I thank God, I may say truly, and my conscience beares mee witness, that in all my services, since I have had the honour to serve his Majestie in any employment, I never had any thing in my heart, but the joynt and individuall prosperitie of King and people; if it have bene my hap to be misconstrued, it is the common proportion of us all, while we are in this life, the righteous judgement is hereafter; here we are subject to errour, and apt to bee misjudged one or another; there is one thing I desire to cleere my selfe of, and I am verie confident, I speake it with so much clearnesse, that I hope I shall have your Christian charitie in the beleefe of it, I did alwayes ever thinke the Parliaments of England, were the happiest Constitutions, that any Kingdome, or any Nation lived under, and under God the meanes of making King and people happie, so far have I bene from being against Parliaments; for my death I here acquit all the world, and pray God heartily to forgive them: and in particular, my Lord Primate, I am verie glad that his Majestie is pleased to conceive mee, not meriting so severe and heavie a punishment as the utmost execution of this sentence; I am verie glad, and infinitely rejoyce in this mercie of his, & beseech God to turne it to him, that hee may finde mercy when he hath most need of it; I wish this Kingdome all the prosperity and happinesse in the world: I did it living, and now dying it is my wish, I doe now professe it from my heart, and do most humbly recommend it unto every man here, and with every man to lay his hand upon his heart, and consider seriously whether the beginning of the happinesse of a people should be written in letters of blood, I feare you are in a wrong way, and I desire Almighty God that no one drop of my blood may rise up in judgement agaynst you.

My Lord of Armagh, I professe my selfe a Protestant, and a true and obedient Son to the Church of England, to that Church wheroin I have bene bred: professing and maintaining he ever

to it: and whereas it hath beene sayd that I have enclin'd to *Papery*, if it be an objection worth answering, let me say truly, that from the time since I was one and twenty yeares of age, till this houre, now going upon nine & forty, I never had thought in my heart, to doubt of the truth of my Religion, nor to my best memory durst any ever profer it any kind whatsover; and so being reconciled to the mercies of *Christ Iesus my Saviour*, into whose bosom I hope shortly to bee gathered, to enjoy those eternall happinsses that shall never have end. I desire hartily the forgivenesse of every man, both for any rash or unadvised word or deed, and desire your prayers; And so my Lords farewell all things of this world. Lord strengthen my faith: give me confidence and assurance in the merits of *Christ Iesus*. I desire you that you would be silent, and ioine in Prayers with me, and for me; and I trust in God that we shall all meet and live eternally in Heaven, there to receive the accomplishment of all happines, where every teare shall be wiped from our eyes, and every sad thought from our hearts: And so God blesse this Kingdom and Iesus have mercy upon my Soule.

Then turning himselfe about, hee saluted all the Noble-men, and tooke a solemne leave of all considerable persons on the Scaffold, giving them his hand:

And after that hee sayd, *Gentlemen*, I would say my prayers, and I entreat you all to pray with me, and for me: then his Chaplaine layd the booke of Common Prayer upon the chaire before him, as hee kneeled downe, on which he prayed almost a quarter of an houre, then he prayed as long or longer without a booke, and ended with the Lords Prayer; then standing up, he spies his brother, *Sir George Wentworth*, and calls him to him, and saith; Brother, wee must part, remember me to my sister, and to my wife, and carrie my blessing to my eldest son, and charge him from me, that he feare God, and continue an obedient son of the Church of England, that he should approve himselfe a faithfull subject to the King, and tell him that he should not have any private grudge or revenge towards any concerning me, and bid him beware that he meddle not with Church livings, for that will prove a moth and canker to him in his estate; and wish him to content himselfe to be a servant to his Countrey, as a Iustice of peace in his Countie, and not aiming at higher preferments: carrie my blessing also to my daughters, *Anne* and *Arabella*, charge them to feare and serve God, and bee will blesse them, not forgetting my little infant, that yet knowes neither good

nor evil, and cannot speake for himselfe, God speake for it and blesse it. Then said he, Now I have nigh done, one stroke will make my wife husbandlesse, my deare child-en fatherlesse, and my poore servants masterlesse, and separate me from my deare brother and all my friends, but let God be to you and them all in all.

After that, going to take off his doublet, and to make himselfe unready, he said, I thank God I am no more afraid of death, nor daunted with any discouragement rising from any feares, but doe as cheerfully put off my doublet at this time, as ever I did when I went to bed. Then he put off his doublet, and wound up his haire with his hands, and put on a white cap.

Then hee called, *Where is the man that should doe this last office?* (meaning the Executioner) *call him to me.* When he came and asked him forgiveuesse, hee told him hee forgave him and all the world. Then kneeling downe by the block, hee went to prayer againe himselfe, the Bishop of Armach kneeling on the one side, and the Minister on the other; to the which Minister after prayer, hee turned himselfe, and spake some few words softly, having his hands lifted up: this Minister closed his hands with his; then bowing himselfe to the earth, to lay his head on the block, he told the Executioner that hee would first lay downe his head to try the fitnesse of the block, and take it up againe, before he would lay it downe for good and all, and so he did: and before hee laid it downe againe, he told the Executioner that he would give him warning when to strike, by stretching forth his hands; and then layd downe his neck on the block, stretching out his hands, the Executioner struck off his head at one blow, then tooke the head up in his hands, and shewed it to all the people, and said, *God save the King.*

FINIS.

